

THE PLAYGOER

The Trick of "The Terrible Meek."

Here are Charles Rann Kennedy's stage directions for the minute or two preceding the raising of the curtain upon "The Terrible Meek":

Before the curtain rises, a bell from some distant place of worship tolls the hour. Nine brass notes, far off, out of tune. Then a heavy peal of thunder, and the sharp, cracking strike of a bolt; yet above all, one other sound, more piercing, a strange unearthly cry. There follows a mighty howling of wind, blended with a confused clamor of voices and the hurrying of many feet. The noises have almost died away, when the curtain rises upon inky darkness.

A sudden rush. The silence deepens. There is a sense of moorlands and desolate places. Far off a cow lows in her stall. Some lost sheep down in the valley bleats dimly. Silence again.

It is broken by the Voice of a Woman, weeping bitterly. A Peasant Woman.

It is not easy to say how, in such a moment and in "inky darkness," any stagecraft can convey to an audience "a sense of moorlands and desolate places." But it would have been easy enough to carry out the rest of these instructions. They were, however, blandly or otherwise, ignored on the stage of The Little Theatre last Tuesday afternoon. There were no sounds of bell, no peal of thunder, no sharp, cracking strike of bolt, no strange, unearthly cry, no mighty howling of wind, no clamor of voices, no hurrying of feet, no sound of cow or sheep. There was silence, there was darkness, there was a puzzling wait. No one in the audience knew whether the curtain had risen or was still lowered. The audience became restless. There was graveyard gloom. Somebody whistled to keep up his courage. Somebody else giggled. Another laughed outright. A man in the rear seats lighted a match. Then most of the audience laughed. Negligence and delay had got them into the wrong mood for what was to follow. The delay had stretched the intermission after the first piece from the advertised fifteen minutes to more than half an hour. The negligence had ignored the stage directions which, if obeyed, would have prepared the audience for the continuance of the "inky darkness" and the solemnity of the "play" that was about to begin. Mr. Kennedy had the right idea in his stage directions. The stage management had the wrong idea in discarding them. The puzzled and irritated audience supposed that something had gone wrong with the lights, that the curtain had "blacked," that any one of a dozen other mischances had fallen to the lot of the new adventure. There was a good deal of fidgeting.

The first words heard from the stage, and in the "inky darkness," were:

"My God! This is awful. I can't stand it."

Then the audience tittered. Probably few among them had read the play or knew in advance what it was about. The adventure seemed in some danger. And presently, when the cockney Soldier said to his Captain, still in the darkness, "It's not exactly the place for a pleasant afternoon, is it, sir?" another titter ran over the house.

This unfortunate beginning, with its misunderstandings, would have been avoided had the stage directions been followed, and followed immediately upon the extinguishing of the lights. And the programme should have contained an explanatory note, if only the stage directions above quoted. The line from the title page at least might have been copied there: "To Be Played in Darkness." It is unwise to take an audience unaware. The audience at Tuesday's matinee did not know that it was expected to sit through three-quarters of an hour of darkness and listen to talk about "the smell of death" and distressful tales of injustice and killing.

"Dam! creepy, I call it," said the Soldier. And the audience agreed.

Apart from that it was a theatrical trick, this darkness in which you heard the "play," effective, but none the less a trick. Presented in the light, "The Terrible Meek" would have been a travesty and the audience would not have sat it out. The Roman Centurion speaking like a twentieth century English officer who had suddenly become a socialist and a deserter; the Roman Legionary talking like Tommy Atkins in the Boer War; the Mother of Christ talking like an English farmhand's wife—would have offended that portion of the audience which they did not bore had the scene been given in the light. It was like a dark scene, with the usual excuse. Up go the lights at the end of the piece, and you behold not a British officer and Tommy Atkins and an Englishwoman, but Mary and the Romans, and Christ crucified between the two crucified thieves! In the light the presentation would have been preposterous—the Romans from Piccadilly and Bethnal Green, the Eastern Mother from the English countryside. Perhaps we lack imagination. Or perhaps Mr. Kennedy has too much.

It is with the theatrical, or the religious, aspect of the matter that the present chronicler concerns himself. Other persons will emit an abundance of words on the religious side of the case. They will do well to remember that plays in the long ago had intimate relation with religion and with ecclesiastical ceremonies. They will be unable to show that Mr. Kennedy has written his play, or that the actors present it, in other than a high and reverent spirit. But as a play this Playgoer likes it not, nor can he read himself of the conviction that its best impression depends upon the trick of placing the auditorium and the stage in darkness. This means that the audience is fooled. Without this trickery Mr. Kennedy's characters of A. D. 33 could not deliver their versions of modern thought. A good deal has been heard about "sincerity" in dramatic art. But Mr. Kennedy's art does not in this case seem sincere, although his purpose is lofty enough. No one will deny that the three actors are entitled to the highest praise. What they do could not be done better; perhaps no others could do it so well. But why should the piece be done at all? A. W.

The Rev. Dubois Henry Loux, of the Metropolitan Temple, has invited theatrical managers and dramatic critics to a reading of a play which he has written. Leslie Gossin will read the play at the Metropolitan Temple next Thursday afternoon at 3 o'clock.

Halide Wright, who is well remembered here as The Painted Lady in "The Passing of the Third Floor Back," has made a hit in London in "Milestones," the new play by Arnold Bennett and Edward Knoblauch.

George Edwards, out of the fulness of his experience, says: "The curse of the theatrical profession is the syndicate running a theatre. The theatre must have a personality."

AT the THEATRES



GEO M COHAN - & SALLIE FISHER
in "45 MINUTES FROM BROADWAY"
at the GEO. M. COHAN THEATRE.

PRISCILLA KNOWLES
ACADEMY OF MUSIC.

RENE THORNTON
IN "THE MAN FROM COOK'S"
NEW AMSTERDAM
THEATRE.
MARCH 25

JENNIE EUSTICE AND DAVID BURTON
in "THE GREYHOUND" at the ASTOR THEATRE.

LONDON'S YIDDISH THEATRE

Jewish Grand Opera and Shakespeare To Be Presented There.

Owing to the recent announcement that another Yiddish theatre, this time a charity playhouse, is to be erected on the East Side in New York for the amusement and education of this city's Hebrew population, "The Pall Mall Gazette's" account of the completion of the Yiddish Theatre in London, which is also erected to instruct as well as to amuse the Yiddish people of London's East End, is interesting.

An attractive building in red brick, capped by domes and towers, has risen in the Commercial Road out of the penny subscriptions, supplemented by generous donations, of the people, says "The Gazette."

It is called "The Temple," or the Peiman Yiddish People's Theatre, after the great Yiddish actor who went to London some years ago and endeavored to establish a permanent Yiddish theatre there, but died on the stage at Lord before his project matured.

After his death the idea was taken up by A. Kennard, who first founded a society and began to gather in the pennies, and then formed a company with a capital of £12,000 to build the theatre.

It is a one-story house, decorated in blue, white and gold. There is accommodation for fifteen hundred persons. After the first night the prices will range from five shillings to sixpence. The theatre will be open every night except Friday.

Mr. Kennard informed a representative of "The Pall Mall Gazette" recently that he hopes to secure from the Lord Chamberlain, in view of the closing for the Jewish Sabbath, permission to open on Sunday. If, however, this arrangement should be found impracticable, the two thousand subscribers will form a club for Sunday performances.

The theatre will be opened with a new Jewish grand opera in four acts and seven scenes by Samuel Alman, A. R. C. M., entitled "King Ahaz."

It is the epoch in Jewish history when the King has turned from the faith of his fathers to play before Babel. Uziel, the hero, who belongs to the old faith, is declared a traitor and is obliged to flee from the country as the result of a woman's intrigue, leaving behind his wife and child.

Fifteen years later he is discovered half wild in the woods. Ahaz has been succeeded by his son, the old faith reigns once more in the land and Uziel is able to return.

The principal artists are Miss Zausmer (soprano), Uziel's wife, Miss Phyllis Davis (contralto), the wife of the Vice-roy; Mr. Kaskinsky (tenor), Uziel; Mr. Winogradoff (baritone), a friend of Uziel; and Mr. Katz (bass), the King. With the exception of Mr. Winogradoff, who comes from the Imperial Theatre, St. Petersburg, these artists have been found in London.

The chorus, thirty in number, and the orchestra, of twenty-four, have also been engaged in London.

For "Rigoletto," which is to be produced shortly, the principals—Mme. Olkina, Mme. Krasavina, M. Tchernoff and M. Semenov—are coming from St. Petersburg.

The production that is immediately to follow the opening grand opera will be Mr. Zankov's "The Melting Pot."

With the view of keeping the theatre open all the year round, Mr. Kennard is arranging for new productions from Yiddish dramatists and for Yiddish versions of English drama from Shakespeare to Shaw.

His aim is, in fact, to reproduce for the benefit of the large Jewish community every form of grand opera and drama, and to make the Temple an educational centre for the Yiddish people in the East End.

NEWMAN TRAVELTALK.

E. M. Newman will conclude to-night the series of "traveltalks" which he is giving



ELSA RINEHARDT ONE OF THE PRINCIPALS WITH WEBER & FIELDS JUBILEE CO BROADWAY THEATRE



EDMUND BREESE IN "THE RIGHT TO BE HAPPY" HUDSON THEATRE. TUESDAY MARCH 26



ROBERT HILLIARD IN "A FOOL THERE WAS" GRAND OPERA HOUSE MARCH 25



WALKER WHITESIDE IN "THE TYPHOON" FULTON THEATRE.

MAKING A RECORD

Academy of Music's Leading Actress Has Passed 900th Performance.

Although primarily Priscilla Knowles' amazing work at the Academy of Music is worth recording for its own sake, it is also valuable as a cheering object lesson to those of us who sometimes fancy ourselves overworked. For this indefatigable young actress, who nearly three weeks ago passed her 900th consecutive performance at the Academy, is now working hopefully to reach the 1000th mark without a break, and thus capture the world's record for stock acting.

Should it not be quite clear what a record of this kind means, it might be well to explain that the present Academy of Music stock company began its career at that house during the last week of August, 1910, and from that time until now has given two performances a day, Sunday excepted, without a holiday or break of any kind.

Miss Knowles is the only member of the company who has not through illness or for any reason whatever missed a single performance. And withal she is light of step, bonnie of manner, with steady voice and apparently steady nerves. Here is at least one person of whom the atrocious New York life, with its demands for pleasure and other things, have not made a victim.

The Academy's actress, whose wonderful energy and achievements are beginning to be noticed about in theatre districts further uptown, has been obliged to make a daily schedule for herself, and follow it faithfully. She described it herself recently in her big dressing room at the historic old Academy, and although she was hurrying with last touches to her costume for the third act of "The Sporting Duchess," she described her merciless routine in a voice that sounded as though she liked it.

"I have to get up in the morning at about 7:45," she explained, airily, "and after my bath I take a few exercises in my room. I often walk down to the theatre to rehearsal, as I am fond of walking and get very little other opportunity. "Rehearsal of the following week's play begins every morning at a little before 10 and lasts until after 12. Then there is half or three-quarters of an hour for lunch. I have to be here in my dressing room before 1:30 to get ready for the matinee. "Between the afternoon and night performances I have an hour for dinner. The rest of the time is spent here in my dressing room, taking off and putting on make-up."

"When is playtime—that is, holiday and rest time?" she was asked.

"Sunday afternoon and evening," replied Miss Knowles, as though she would like to know how any one could ask for a longer or more satisfactory holiday time. "Sunday morning, of course, we rehearse. "And these precious half holidays are spent sleeping!"

"Oh, my, no; not at all!" cried the vigorous young woman as she placed her Gainsborough conception upon her puffy red curls. "I come down here to the theatre night comes comes nearly always, and the afternoons I usually spend walking."

As a preparation for the physical labors of stock acting in New York, Miss Knowles has travelled the country over, playing everywhere, from coast to coast.

"I think I have played in every state in the Union," she said, mistily, as though any other place and time except just here and now were unreal. "I have played in San Francisco, too, and Portland. I like the climate of the West coast. It is beautiful and unchangeable. But, somehow, I like it in the East best. I am from Philadelphia, you know."

Philadelphia! The irony of her coming to New York and breaking a hurry record here!

Priscilla Knowles has a genuinely charming way of speaking. She has a soft-toned voice and great clarity of enunciation, which makes it possible to hear her with ease everywhere in the big auditorium of the Academy. And her acting has the same fluent quality as her voice. It must be the easiest thing in the world for her to sail onto the stage from the wings, to toss off her words in jest or to melt them down for tragedy, to throw a phrase over her expressive shoulder to the audience which sits out there in the darkness tensely attentive to her slightest move. It looks very easy.

Miss Knowles says that the work of a leading woman requires no acting.

"The parts are all alike," she declared, "thereby recalling the words of G. B. S., who says that all a woman has to do in order to take leading parts in the usual society play is merely to be pretty, to know how to dress well and to know nothing about acting. But there are exceptions. Miss Knowles is successful as a leading woman, yet she does know how to act."

"I am ambitious to play on Broadway," she responded Miss Knowles, when asked whether all this exertion of hers was to lead her. "I am not at all anxious to become a star and appear in the ordinary play," she went on with a disparaging expression. "I want character parts. That is what I am working toward."

And if it is true that the varied work of a stock company turns out capable and versatile actors, Miss Knowles should make her mark in characterisation some day, for already she has played over four hundred parts!

"OLD LADIES OF THE STAGE"

Chief Honors Seem Now to Belong to Mrs. Thomas Whiffin.

When Mrs. J. H. Gilbert passed away, after having been the idol for many years of the theatrical profession itself as well as of the general theatregoing public at large, there was no question as to her place in the history of the theatre. With a singular unanimity everybody conceded that the mantle of "the grand old lady of the stage" would best fit the shoulders of Mrs. Annie Yeomans. She wore the honors with becoming grace until only the other day, when the grim reaper gathered her in.

There was many a tug at the heart-strings felt by theatregoers all over the land as they read of the obsequies of this incomparable actress, who already seems to have been of another day than ours. The present generation of theatregoers were not privileged to see the late Mrs. Yeomans at her best. But their fathers and mothers will recall always with the most pleasant recollection her delightful impersonations in the "Mulligan" series of plays, during the Harrikan and Hart tenancy of the Theatre Comique in lower Broadway, New York.

The honors now appear to have fallen to Mrs. Thomas Whiffin, known and beloved by a large public. Born in England as long ago as 1845, Mrs. Whiffin began her stage career at the age of twenty. She came to America in 1868 as a member of the Gaiety Opera Company, which presented Offenbach's "Marriage aux Lanternes" at what was then known as Wood's Museum, in New York, now Daly's Theatre. She has been under the management at one time or another of nearly every one of the famous producers in America during the last forty years, beginning with John Templeton. No dramatic chronicler can tell all the important roles she has portrayed. A keen that gives Mrs. Whiffin personally a keen delight to recall in "H. M. S. Pinafore," which was first produced in

ACTORS' FUND BENEFIT.

The principal features in the annual Actors' Fund benefit, arranged by David Frohman for the Century Theatre next Friday afternoon, will include a new one-act play by Kate Jordan, entitled "Susan's Gentleman," with Laurette Taylor and Ian MacLaren; a new play by E. H. Peple, with Henry Kolker, Frank Craven and others; a burlesque by Augusta Kidder, entitled "The Garden of Waller," with Edwin Arden and Alice Fischer; a musical skit, "Three Little Maids of Broadway," with Sallie Fisher, Lillian Lorraine and Gertrude Bryan; the courtship scene from "Henry V," with Lewis Waller and Madge Titterton; also special numbers by Otis Skinner, Mme. Simone, Perceval Knight and David Blapham, who will contribute a special costume vocal novelty. The special dramatic feature will be the trial scene from "The Merchant of Venice," with Goodwin, A. E. Amson, Julian L'Estrange, Fred Edr. Fuller, Mellich, Constance Collier, Olive Wyndham and half a hundred other prominent actors and actresses. Arthur Ward will direct the orchestra, and the stage managers will be Edgar MacGregor, Fred Stanhope and William Seymour.

In his book of recollections lately published Mr. Frank Archer tells a little story of Tennyson and the late William Barrett. In January, 1885, Mr. Archer lunched with the poet, and here is part of his record of the occasion:

"I asked him if he often went to the theatre. 'Rarely now,' he replied. He thought the last thing he saw was the Rip Van Winkle of Jefferson, which he liked extremely. His son corrected him, and said that this was not the last occasion; the last, I think, being a visit to the Lyceum. He

inquired of me who 'Mr. Barrett' was. I told him. Wilson Barrett at this time was playing Hamlet in London, and evidently Tennyson had heard of or read of it, for he remarked: 'I can't stand "A Little More than Kind and Less than Kind" at all.' I should think not. Who could? That and the same actor's "The Airs shrewdly, is it very cold?" however, were more than two of the most idiomatic readings in the modern Shakespearean theatre. They were also two of the most useful. They caused so much laughter that "new readings" have been comparatively scarce ever since.—Pall Mall Gazette.

BERNHARDT AND THE LEGION OF HONOR.

"For heaven's sake, be kind, but be reasonable, too!" exclaims Sarah Bernhardt to an interviewer. "Spare me the vexed reminder that people are trying to cause me pain by refusing me the decoration. It is a pain—a great, unmerited pain. I never asked for the Cross of the Legion. I did not even desire it; but some six years ago my friend the late Catulle Mendès met me one day and said that he had had a conversation with M. Briand, and that he told him in a temper that no government had yet proposed to decorate me. His remarks, he said, had impressed the Minister of

Public Instruction, who said that he would have me decorated. Mendès was so enthusiastic that he communicated his delight to me, and I confess that I was captivated by the Red Ribbon, and thought it charming."

"But immediately after this the administrative exigencies appeared. The chancellor of the order sent me a sheet containing a long list of indiscreet questions. The examiners wanted to pry into every detail of my artistic career, and even into my private life. I have nothing to conceal, it is true; yet we all have certain little secrets that I prefer to keep to ourselves. Finally, I was not to be decorated as a comédienne, but as a professor at the Conservatoire. When I saw that I quickly sent the paper back. Poor Mendès! When I told him what I had done he seemed on the point of losing his mind. M. Briand, he said, had promised it to him. It was all settled. After Catulle Mendès, other friends tried the same thing. MM. Rostand, Hervieu, Richepin and others tried, and failed. I have to decline the same friendly kindness every year. I expect to have to do it again in 1913. The real reason why I would never be decorated as an actress is, I suppose, because I left the Comédie Française. The chancellor of the order, I suppose, wants to make others realize the danger of leaving the House of Molière, and to-day I regret less than ever having left it."

Shakespeare's Ghost writes to a London paper correcting Alfred Calmout, who insists that "sea" in the line, "Or to take arms against a sea of troubles," is an Elizaean misprint for "siege." "I should like to point out," says the Ghost, "that it is some time since I was in the flesh, and that therefore I cannot be expected to remember every thing I wrote, but I do not think I wrote 'siege of troubles.' The expression is weak, to say nothing of odd-sounding, and, moreover, would not have conveyed the sense of overwhelming burden which the context requires. I probably meant sea in the sense of seaful, in the same way as you say peak of griefs, world (meaning worldful) of cares. You could say 'world (worldful) of troubles.' Why not 'sea of troubles'? It conveys the idea of immensity quite as well."

One for the Ghost!

Martin Harvey thinks it good advertising to publish a genealogical chart tracing his daughter's descent from Charles II.

New and Old Theatrical Attractions for the Coming Week

COMEDY AND DRAMA.

Academy of Music—"The Regeneration," a dramatization of Owen Kildare's book "My Mamie Rose," will be revived by the resident stock company, with Priscilla Knowles and Theodore Friebs in the leading roles.

Astor Theatre—"The Greyhound," by Paul Armstrong and Wilson Mizner. Modern melodrama, with spirit and snap.

Belasco Theatre—David Warfield, in David Belasco's "The Return of Peter Grimm." Same play, well set.

Century Theatre—"The Garden of Allah," desert play from Robert Hichens's book of the same name.

Collier's Comedy Theatre—Graham Moffat's comedy, "Buntly Pulls the Strings," with Molly Pearson a captivating Buntly.

Criterion Theatre—Louis Mann, in "Elevating a Husband."

Daly's Theatre—Lewis Waller, in "Monseigneur Beaucaire." Charming romance capably acted by Mr. Waller and his specially chosen company.

Empire Theatre—"The centenary production of 'Oliver Twist,' with cast and production of New Amsterdam Theatre unchanged.

Fulton Theatre—Walker Whiteside, in

"Typhoon," a play from the Hungarian of Menyhert Lenkey. Striking play, frankly and well acted.

Gaiety Theatre—Augustin MacFugh's farce, "Officer 666," with Wallace Edinger and George Nash. Bright farce.

Grand Opera House—Farewell presentation by Robert Hilliard of the vampire play, "A Fool There Was."

Harris Theatre—"The Talker," by Marion Fairfax, with Tully Marshall in the leading role.

Hudson Theatre—On Tuesday evening, March 26, at the Hudson Theatre, H. Kellett Chambers's play, "The Right to Be Happy," in which Dorothy Donnelly and Edmund Breesse will have leading parts, will have its first New York hearing. The story concerns the daughter of one of New York's Knickerbocker families, who, reduced to earn her living by going into business, becomes involved in a complexity of social troubles. Others in the cast are Leslie Faber, Louise Galloway, George Le Guere, Grace Morrissey and Arthur LeGordon.

Irving Place Theatre—Last week of the regular dramatic season at this theatre. The week's repertory will be: Monday night, Strauss's "Die Fledermaus"; Tuesday night, "The Gypsy Baron" will be sung for the first time this season as a benefit for Musical Director Siegfried Glanz;

Wednesday night, Wedekind's "The Awakening of Spring"; Thursday night, "Die Schöne Helena"; Friday night, "The Waltz Dream"; Saturday matinee, "Mina von Barnhelm"; Saturday evening, operatic carnival of acts from the most popular comic operas given here this season.

Knickerbocker Theatre—Edward Knoblauch's Oriental play, "Kismet," with Otis Skinner in the part of Hajj, the beggar, crowds the house every night.

Liberty Theatre—Henry Miller, in A. E. Thomas's comedy, "The Rainbow."

Little Theatre—John Galsworthy's play, "The Pigeon" at evening performances and at the Saturday matinee. At the Tuesday, Thursday and Friday matinees the programme will consist of Charles Rann Kennedy's one-act play, "The Terrible Meek."

NEW PRODUCTIONS.

Monday night, March 25, at the New Amsterdam Theatre, "The Man from Cook's," a musical play from the French of Maurice Ordonneau.

Tuesday night, March 26, at the Hudson Theatre, H. Kellett Chambers's play, "The Right to Be Happy."

Broadway Theatre—Weber and Fields' Jubilee company in "Hokey Pokey" and

MUSICAL PLAYS.

Manhattan Opera House—Paul M. Potter's comedy, "The Girl from Rectors."

Maxine Elliott's Theatre—Richard Walton Tully's poetic play, "The Bird of Paradise." Tropical music, played on Hawaiian native instruments.

Playhouse—George Broadhurst's popular play, "Bought and Paid For." A unique play of the times.

Republic Theatre—W. C. De Mille's "The Women," a realistic sketch of political life at Washington.

Thirty-ninth Street Theatre—Lewis Waller's production of "A Butterfly on the Wheel." Realistic courtroom scene.

Wallack's Theatre—George Arliss still giving his distinguished impersonation of the famous English diplomat in Louis N. Parker's successful drama, "Disraeli."

West End Theatre—Return for another week in New York of Charles Klein's "The Gamblers," with Jane Crowl, Orme Cudrara and other original members of the cast.

"Buntly Pulls the Strings," "Hokey Pokey" is different every week, with the introduction of novel scenes from former sketches given at the old music hall.

Casino Theatre—Felix Albini's comic opera, "Baron Trenck." Unusually charming music.

George M. Cohan's Theatre—George M. Cohan in a revival of his musical farce, "Forty-five Minutes from Broadway."

Globe Theatre—Eddie Foy in "Over the River," with a popular cabaret scene, to which new features are constantly being added. Professional matinee Thursday, March 28.

Lyric Theatre—"The romantic opera, "Little Boy Blue," with tuneful music.

New Amsterdam Theatre—To-morrow night first New York performance of "The Man from Cook's," a musical comedy from the French of Maurice Ordonneau, the English book and lyrics of which are by Henry Blossom and music by Raymond Hubbell. The play will be in two scenes, the first in a pension on the Avenue de l'Opera, Paris, and the second in the gardens of the Hotel Vesuvio, in Naples. The cast includes Walter Percival, Leslie Kolker, Rene Thornton, Marion Murray and Stella Hoban.

Park Theatre—"The Quaker Girl," a musical comedy, with Ina Claire and Clifton Crawford.